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See Page 13

WITH THE COURIER

Second snub for Saint Hill

By David Thompson

ST JOHN Ambulance is refusing to accept donations from the Church of Scientology.

The announcement is another rebuff for the cult after Queen Victoria Hospital, and Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital also turned down proceeds from the cult's recent Saint Hill summer fete.

John Mills, communications director of the volunteer organisation's London head office, said flatly: "We do not want to give credibility to an organisation of which we do not approve. It could bring the good name of St John Ambulance into disrepute."

He stressed: "We will not accept donations from any religious organisation not recognised by the British Council of Churches.

"It is an easy rule to follow. There is no grey area, the Church of Scientology is not recognised."

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Advertisements and flyers for the annual Scientology event on June 25 said it was in aid of St John Ambulance and the two hospitals, which have already denied links and refused money.

The promotions also said it would be opened by Radio Mercury, but the station strenuously denied links with the fair. It later emerged that a former station presenter would be attending.

Mr Mills added: "We are not happy that the Church of Scientology used our name on promotional leaflets. We wrote to them saying we did not want any publicity associated with them.

"We gave first aid cover at the Saint Hill fete, as we would for anyone without question, and would ask for donations to cover our expenses."

He added that the East Grinstead and Felbridge division had accepted money in the past but were not fully aware of the overall policy.

Fete organiser Liz Dalrymple said:

"Roger Leonard, of the Felbridge and East Grinstead division of St John Ambulance, was quoted in a previous Courier article saying, 'We've no reason to doubt their generosity, I know they have had a pretty rough ride but maybe that's to do with ignorance and intolerance'.

"We have been raising money for the St John Ambulance for many years at Saint Hill, and have enjoyed a long warm association with the local division.

"The money was raised in good faith, and given in good faith by many people who, like us, support the good work of the St John brigade and we will ensure that the brigade receives the money. To do otherwise would be an inappropriate re-allocation of charitable funds raised in their name."

● THE Hubbard College of Administration, a management training project which uses techniques developed by Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard, has celebrated its first anniversary with a champagne reception.